

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Coming of Age Literature Circles: First Journal Response

So far. . . .

What do you think of your literature circle book so far?

Consider these more specific questions to help you develop a valuable opinion:

- ☉ **Character:** Do you identify with the main character in any way? Why or why not?
- ☉ **Plot:** Did the book begin in an interesting way to you?
- ☉ **Theme:** Does the book seem to have a message? Explain.
- ☉ **Style:** Do you like the author's craft (the way that he writes)? Why or why not?

To successfully complete your journal, you should:

- ☉ Use specific details and evidence from the book, like names and events, to support your statements.
 - See the example on the back of this sheet to get an example of how to use details and specifics.
- ☉ Be sure to include the title (underlined) and author of your book in the first sentence. State how far you have read in the second sentence.
- ☉ As always, please spell check AND proofread/edit to ensure that you used proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- ☉ Write between 1/2 page and 1 page.
- ☉ Please double space. We need the space to write comments about your awesome writing.
- ☉ Use 12-point **Times New Roman** or **Arial** font.
- ☉ This is an opinion piece, so you may use FIRST PERSON ("I," "my," "me")
- ☉ This is a 25-point writing grade.



See the back of this sheet for an example.

Casie Hall
6A and 6B Humanities Teacher
September 25, 2006

First Journal Response: Breath

So far, Breath by Donna Jo Napoli is an interesting, but grotesque book. I have read through chapter three, or page 33. I identify with main character, Salz, because he is the same age as my students, and because I understand the time period in which he lives through my studies of Medieval European history. I enjoy that Salz is a happy and fulfilled person, despite the challenges that he faces with his disease, Cystic Fibrosis. For example, even though he cannot do the things that other boys his age can do, he keeps himself busy and entertained by studying religion, finding herbs, and learning new healing strategies for the coven. Also, he is curious and anxious to learn about the world around him, as shown by his studies of the Christian religion from Pater Frederick, and his lessons about new potions from Grossmutter. As a teacher, I value curiosity and love of learning.

So far, the plot of Breath is very interesting, but somewhat slow. Even though the bird pie that Salz makes in the second chapter sounds interesting, I was ready to hear about some action by the time he was finished. I wish that the story had gotten off to a more exciting start. It does pick up by the third chapter, though, when Salz travels to Hoxter for his lesson.

So far, one of the themes of Breath seems to be the contrast in Salz's belief and learning between the old pagan practices and the newer Christian practices. For example, he has a conversation in the first chapter in which the piper states that, "Christians can't abide by pagan ways," while Salz argues that his coven, "practice[s] the good magic of the old religion, with the enlightenment of the new religion." (pg. 14-15) This is a complex theme that I think will develop more as the book progresses.

Finally, I enjoy Donna Jo Napoli's writing style because she successfully gives me a feel for what it was like to live in the Middle Ages in Europe. She uses descriptive words that help me create images in my mind of what she describes, for example, I felt like I could see the piper when she described his shirt as "red like blood," (pg. 2) and I could almost taste the "bird pie" described in chapter two. Also, she uses just enough "wonderwords" to keep me interested in the reading, for example, words like "culpable," "melancholy," and "paroxysms." (pgs.3, 8, 40) Overall, Breath has been an enjoyable book and I look forward to reading further.